

For Immediate Release
Contact:

Develop Your Family Disaster Plan

A tornado, a flood, a fire or a hazardous materials accident can occur in a blink-of-an-eye. You and your family might be forced to evacuate your neighborhood or you might be confined inside your home. What can you do to protect your family? You should develop a family disaster plan.

Families with a disaster plan can and do cope better with disaster because they are prepared. Remember, knowing what to do is your best protection in any dangerous situation. Responding to a disaster is certainly easier when the whole family is together at home. Since the family is not together 24-hours a day, the first thing a family needs to plan for is how will you find each other if parents are at work, children are at school or a home on vacation. The key to preparedness is having a plan.

Follow these steps to create and implement a family disaster plan:

1. Learn about hazards in your area and how you should respond by contacting your county or city emergency management agency. Learn your community's warning signals. Buy a NOAA Tone Alert Weather Radio. Ask about your workplace and your children's school disaster plans.

2. Based on the hazards, the family can design an action plan. Depending on the type of disaster, the family can share responsibilities. For example in an evacuation, children might gather the pets while parents gather food or supplies.

3. In the case of a fire pick two places to meet: outside your home. In the case of a daytime disaster when your family might not be home, pick a meeting place outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home. Everyone, including small children, should know their address and phone number.

4. Ask an out-of-state friend to be your family contact for everyone to call if the family gets separated. After a disaster, it is often easier to call long distance.

5. Have a plan for your pets. Except for Seeing Eye dogs, pets are not allowed in shelters.

O.K., we have a plan, now what? Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.). Teach your children how and when to call 911. Learn

basic safety measures, such as CPR and First Aid. Show each family member how and when to turn off water, gas and electricity at the main switches. Teach each family member how to use a fire extinguisher. Stock emergency supplies and assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit (see below). Determine the best escape routes from different rooms and find the safe spots in your home for different types of disasters.

Disaster Supplies Kit

Your family disaster supply kit should include enough supplies to meet your needs for at least three days. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy to carry, water-resistant containers, such as backpacks or duffle bags. It is a good idea to keep a smaller kit in the trunk of your car in case of inclement weather on a trip.

Your disaster supplies kit should include:

- A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day)
- Food that will not spoil
- One change of clothing and footwear per person
- One blanket or sleeping bag per person
- A first aid kit, including prescription medicines
- Emergency tools, battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries
- An extra set of car keys
- Cash
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members
- An extra pair of glasses, contacts and contact solution.

Routinely, make sure your family remembers meeting places, phone numbers and safety rules. Practice different disaster responses, i.e. meeting outside, or a safe room during a tornado. Replace stored water every three months and stored food every six months. Test and recharge your fire extinguisher according to manufacturer's instructions. Test smoke alarms monthly and change batteries at least once a year.

What about the neighbors? Meet your neighbors and plan how everyone can work together after a disaster until help arrives. Take Community Emergency Response Training (CERT). Know which neighbors have special skills and which neighbors have special needs, i.e. disabled or elderly. Make child care plans so that all of the children in your neighborhood are safe.